

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AGR-05 OES-07

/080 W

-----091049Z 092813 /20

R 061040Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9672

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, DM

SUBJ: BENIN: KEREKOU IN MAY DAY SPEECH CHALLENGES DISSENTERS

1. INSTEAD OF DELIVERING MAY DAY PAEAN TO BENINESE WORKER, PRESIDENT KEREKOU USED MAY 1 RALLY TO DENOUNCE BENINESE LABOR MOVEMENT AND WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR "UNPARDONABLE LACK OF DETERMINATION AND FIRMNESS IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY". KEREKOU ACCUSED WORKERS OF COLLUSION WITH COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES BY CIRCULATING "CYNICAL RUMORS AND FALSE INFORMATION" DESIGNED TO WEAKEN CLASS HATRED OF THE BOURGEOISIE, AND BY COOPERATING WITH THE COMMERCANTS VEREUX (SHADY BUSINESSMEN), WHOM HE CHARACTERIZED REPEATEDLY AS A "FIFTH COLUMN" OF IMPERIALISM. ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT, UNIONS AND THEIR MEMBERS WERE PLAYING INTO THE HANDS OF THE COMMERCANT VEREUX BY SPREADING RUMORS OF A CORN SHORTAGE INTENDED TO DEMORALIZE THE PEOPLE. KEREKOU CLAIMED THAT CORN

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SHORTAGE WAS ARTIFICIAL AND CALLED ON WORKERS TO USE THEIR RESOURCES TO SEARCH OUT ILLEGAL STOCKS OF GRAIN AND EXPOSE THE ANTI-REVOLUTIONARIES.

2. KEREKOU FURTHER ACCUSED WORKERS OF FAILING TO COOPERATE WITH COMMITTEES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION (CDR) WITHIN EACH ORGANIZATION AND BECOMING WILLING PURVEYORS OF

GOSSIP AND RUMORS INTENDED TO CREATE INTERNAL DISSENTION AND PAVE THE WAY FOR ANOTHER IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION AGAINST BENIN. HE DESCRIBED SITUATION AS BORDERING ON TREASON SINCE THESE "IMPENITENT PURVEYORS OF COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY RUMORS" COULD BE FOUND "AT EVERY LEVEL OF OUR REVOLUTIONARY STATE." THE PRESIDENT WARNED THAT COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES SHOULD REALIZE CLASS STRUGGLE "WAS NOT A CHILD'S GAME" BUT A STRUGGLE UNTO DEATH, AND THAT WHEN IT CAME TO ARMED CONFRONTATION, THE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARIES COULD EXPECT NO MERCY FROM THE "DICTATORSHIP OF THE REVOLUTION."

3. COMMENT: KEREKOU'S SPEECH TOOK AUDIENCE AS WELL AS FOREIGN OBSERVERS BY SURPRISE, SINCE IT IS FIRST TIME THAT HE HAD ADMITTED EXISTENCE OF WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE REVOLUTION. FOOD SHORTAGE, ARBITRARY ACTIONS ON PART OF DISTRICT CHIEFS ABUSING EMERGENCY POWERS, AND WEARINESS OVER LONG IDEOLOGICAL TRAINING SESSIONS HAVE GIVEN RISE TO VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF PUBLIC DISCONTENT AND RESISTENCE: FARMERS IN PARAKOU APPARENTLY HAVE REFUSED, DESPITE PLEAS FROM INTERIOR MINISTER AZONHIHO, TO SELL CROPS TO GOVERNMENT AT OFFICIAL PRICE OR TO ATTEND REVOLUTIONARY MEETINGS. IN COTONOU ANTI-GOVERNMENT SLOGANS HAVE APPEARED, AND ONE HEARS OCCASIONAL REMARKS THAT IT IS "TIME TO GET RID" OF KEREKOU. CIVIL SERVANTS IN MANY MINISTRIES EXPRESS PERSONAL DOUBTS AS TO DIRECTION REVOLUTION IS TAKING. YET KEREKOU APPEARS DETERMINED TO USE FORCE IF NECESSARY TO PUSH ON WITH REVOLUTION.

4. THREATENING TONE OF SPEECH IS ALSO SYMPTOMATIC OF PARANOIA WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE GRIPPED KEREKOU SINCE JAN 16 ATTACK. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL APPEARANCES UNDER HEAVY GUARD AT OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS, KEREKOU KEEPS OUT OF SIGHT. WHEN HE DOES TRAVEL HIS INTENDED ROUTE IS SEALED OFF BY GUARDS ARMED WITH MACHINE GUNS HOURS IN ADVANCE. FOLLOWING APPEARANCE OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT SLOGANS APRIL 14 KEREKOU CLOSED FOUR-LANE BOULEVARD SEPARATING PALACE FROM BEACH, THEREBY ADDING ANOTHER CAUSE FOR POPULAR DISCONTENT BY DEPRIVING URBAN POPULATION OF A MAJOR WEEKEND RECREATION AREA.

5. KEREKOU'S NERVOUSNESS MAY STEM IN PART FROM BELIEF THAT MERCENARIES INTEND TO LAUNCH ANOTHER ATTACK ON COTONOU, THIS TIME FROM THE SEA. ON MAY 5 SIX ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS WERE SET UP ON BEACH IN FRONT OF AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE UNDER SUPERVISION OF NORTH KOREANS INSTRUCTING BENINESE IN USE OF WEAPONS. PREVIOUSLY WE HAVE HAD REPORTS OF HEAVY WEAPONS BEING MOVED ONTO THE BEACHES AFTER DARK IN ANTICIPATION OF A MERCENARY RETURN.

6. WHETHER OR NOT KEREKOU ACTUALLY FEARS ANOTHER ATTACK, IT

IS CLEAR FROM HIS SPEECH THAT THE REGIME DOES NOT INTEND TO BOW
TO PUBLIC PRESSURE OR RESISTENCE. HOWEVER UNHAPPY THE
POPULATION MAY BE, AS LONG AS KEREKOU CAN CREDIBLY MAINTAIN
THE STATE OF EMERGENCY, HE WILL BE IN A POSITION TO IMPOSE
HIS WILL BY FORCE.
THOMPSON

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